CHRISTIAN DRAMA

VOL. I, NO. IV NOVEMBER, 1947 SIXPENCE

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JUDGEMENT AT CHELMSFORD

By CHARLES WILLIAMS

Scala Theatre, June 14–28, 1947

Charles Williams wrote this pageant-play for the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Diocese of Chelmsford in 1939, and it was ready for production by Phyllis Potter when war began. The authorities of the Diocese, feeling that they had here a work of too great importance to be denied a showing even by a war, have presented it as a Thanksgiving for Victory and in support of their post-war appeal. Their gallantry in persevering with the attempt at a time of such constriction as this deserves warm appreciation from all who desire religious drama to reach the highest level of writing.

For this script has greatness. Charles Williams, whose loss we are led to mourn all the more by hearing this play, was a Christian thinker both acute and deep. He was little acquainted with the technical needs and devices of acting, and sometimes fell into ineptitudes, but his sense of dramatic organization was sure and grand, so that this play moves nobly and unwaveringly throughout its course. As a poet he has been reckoned " difficult ", but that is because his imagination is intellectual, and everything, even what we should ordinarily call emotional experiences, is mediated through the mind as well as the heart: he does in fact for Christians what Shaw has done for a larger public, and does it, in his austerer way, as well as Shaw. He uses a verse-form, which with its system of interior rhymes, is at once muscular and attractive. And for us he should be valued most of all because he, of all our poets, most fully and faithfully exhibits the meaning of the Incarnation in every aspect of life divine and human: so that the sublimity (as well as the " difficulty ") of his work lies in the new orientation—so often fascinatingly, disconcertingly unexpected—of every thought in a Christian's mind. This play reveals him at the the height of his powers.

In pattern, it is clearly derived from T. S. Eliot's *The Rock*. That was, as *The Times* rightly pointed out, " an ecclesiastical revue ", with a thread of modern plot out of which arose spectacular scenes drawn from various periods of history, and a Chorus who used their voices

instead of showing their legs. The success of *The Rock* was due to the dramatic contrasts thus obtained, and to the brilliance with which Eliot seized his choral opportunity both for wit and for wisdom. Sallies like that on the suburbs:—

" And the wind shall say: ' Here were decent, godless people,
Their only monument the asphalt road
And a thousand lost golf balls ' "

got a roar of laughter, while tears came in response to such beauties as:—

" Our gaze is submarine, our eyes look upward
And see the light that fractures through unquiet water.
We see the light, but see not whence it comes.
O Light Invisible, we glorify Thee! "

Charles Williams has adapted this pattern to his own use. His work is more unified than Eliot's, who was " book and lyric writer " to someone else's scenario: *Judgement at Chelmsford* is Williams' in form as well as in script. The result is more ecclesiastical and less of a revue: there is less concession to entertainment and decoration, and almost no comic relief. When comedy does arise it is incidental to the religious subject—" I don't think we could have dog-races . . . not up the aisles! "—or it is the brilliant intellectual comedy of argument as in the Helena-Constantius scene. The play is steadfast in pursuit of a single aim, the judgement of the young diocese and through her of the Church in all its history: a judgement taking into account deeds both good and evil, but based finally on the acceptance by Christ's Body of Christ's Cross. This is evidenced by the magnificent sermon of Ken and the poem of Quarles:—

" So I my best-beloved's am: so he is mine ";

and accepted by Chelmsford:—

" O Grief, I take the Joy your grief brings ;
Joy, what is grief while that Joy lives ? "

This is the climax of the drama. Its unfolding is carried out by a series of exhibitions of the meaning of Christian Love. The exploration of this was one of Charles Williams' most insistent impulses, and in this play he has dramatized many aspects of Love. There is the love of Christ even unto death, shown by the martyrs, Protestant and Catholic alike, at the Reformation:—

" Blessed Essex, be known in Love forever."

There is the knowledge of God's Love, more terrible than death itself to common humanity, who, as Eliot says:—

" Fear the hand at the window, the fire in the thatch, the fist in the tavern, the push into the canal
Less than we fear the Love of God."

This knowledge is shown forth by Osyth before the Danes:—

" *Chieftain*: Say you are frightened of this axe.
Osyth: Of course I am frightened

as I used first to be as a child when it lightened—
but I laughed too, as I laugh now at this,
and at you, friend, if you will not think it unkind.

Chieftain (swinging axe): Feel the wind of Odin, and the Ravens flying!

Osyth: I have felt a winter frost much colder,
when I knelt before the altar of Love that loves."

and after her death:—

" *Chelmsford*: What did you see, Osyth, as you died?

Osyth: I saw the City where Love loves and is loved.
It was striking out of earth; all the liking
of man for man, woman for woman, man for woman
opened outward into a glory; it ran
out of the hidden points of the flesh and the soul
into the whole pattern of exchange of beauty . . ."

Here is expounded one of the author's cardinal doctrines, the *exchange* which is the nature of Love, as Prospero flashingly described it:—

" at the first sight
" They have changed eyes . . ."

and which Charles Williams regarded as being the essence of God's apprehensible Nature.

He shows its working in a love-scene between Helena, the daughter of Old King Cole of Colchester, and Constantius the " Western Caesar." (Helena discovered the True Cross, and her son was Constantine, the first Christian Emperor). On the earthly plane, the scene is love-at-first-sight in its full passion. The sensual aspect of Love has been amusingly blown into the play earlier on, by a side-wind, in the caustic comments of a nun-turned-play-producer on the attempts of a schoolgirl to act the Magdalen. Here, it is seen fully awake and combined with the spiritual love that will change the world:—

" This man died
at York: his son was Constantine, and a Christian—
No one knows why.
Indeed no one knows why.
But in some exchange between the Omnipotence
and man, in some such ravishing hour as this,
when our incarnate and most courteous lord
exhibits the actual unveiled beauty of flesh
to eyes of love; making the love and the loving,
the lover and the beloved, the beloved and the lover,
into a glorious mystery of himself—
might not that be an obscure reason in God?
Brother, our lord is incarnate, you forget—
and not a mirage in a desert of piety."

This scene is a good illustration of the high demands made by the author on his actors and producer. It can be imagined as an exalting piece of theatre; for it combines the physical passion of an Antony and

Cleopatra, and the witty duel of a Beatrice and Benedick, with the theological dedication of the leaders of Christendom. But to convey that exaltation to an audience, in the lofty poetry of its expression, demands at once the acting skill required by the first two kinds of characterization and the spiritual understanding involved in the last. As played at the Scala, it was embarrassing rather than exalting.

This raises the question, burned into my mind by the experience of reading and then seeing this play; how strong is the interpreter's responsibility to his author? Here is a great script, of which a travesty was presented on the Scala stage. Yet the courage and devotion of hundreds, from those who financed and managed it to those who produced and played in it, were freely given. And a play is written to be produced. Yes, but to produce it, even to the best of one's ability, is not enough. One must have understanding and ability suitable and adequate to the task. We know the difficulties that were faced in this production. We know the current shortages of labour and materials for costume. We know that internal causes compelled a change of producer at a date which left the distinguished lady who took over an inadequate minimum of time. But still we as Charles Williams' audience must judge by the completed result shown to us: and however much our special knowledge may cause us to forgive, we must never forget that what is seen upon the stage is the only thing the audience can be expected to know. A fine author was commissioned, and faithfully set forth the Christian Faith in his script: we commit a sin against him and against the Faith by giving his play a bad showing.

So let us try to analyse what was done. The script was not severely cut, and this was great gain. The setting was dignified and effective, though it must have denied a good deal of the action to the upper tiers of spectators. The framework of the Judgement was clearly displayed: the young girl Chelmsford met by the Accuser:—

> "I come
> From going with time up and down the earth
> Testing the worth of the Confessors,"

and judged before the Five Great Sees of Christendom. The pageantry, as one hoped, was skilfully handled by the expert in that kind, and some theatrically effective moments were obtained, especially in Part One. The stage was kept colourful, and the show did not become dull till near the end.

But the colour was crude and garish. No doubt at this moment it was impossible to achieve, but artistically it is necessary to record that the play demands treatment by a single designer, whose taste and imagination match the author's and who controls everything visually presented. The hotchpotch of crude colour we saw was painful to look at and a bar to the apprehension of the subtleties of the thought. The same may be said of some aspects of the production. If one is producing a poet, one must trust in the power of poetry, and not, for instance, introduce a bevy of dancers performing meaningless gyrations while the Chorus speaks. And the acceptance of the Cross, literally the *crux* of the play, must not be pushed into a corner.

These are strong criticisms, perhaps, but they are tempered by gratitude to the producer for putting order, life and some fire into what appeared to have been a formless, cold void of actors. For the level of acting was lamentable. There were reasonably good performances of Ken, Cedd and most of the Five Sees, with an occasional moment of adequacy in the historical scenes. But there was a young Chelmsford who minced without feeling, an Accuser who spoke clearly but without conviction, a Chorus faithful rather to the correctness of South Kensington than to the ecstasy of Heaven, and a multitude of personages unable to move with precision, speak with meaning or conceive a character. Those Danes wouldn't have hurt a fly: those witches wouldn't have raised a mouse: those schoolgirls would all have been bottom of every class.

The result was travesty. And we should learn from it not to betray our good authors and our Church by putting on public performances which rightly cause the beholder to blaspheme. No other criterion will serve for choosing actors, or anyone else, to present our Faith in public, but this: are they adequate to the task (in this case a hard task) that is set before them? And if we haven't got people who pass the test, then we must find and train them before we begin to produce the play. Let us not forget that we too are confronted by the Accuser: " God's true knowledge of all things made."

E. Martin Browne.

ELEMENTS OF RELIGIOUS DRAMA

By R. H. Ward

PART III

This is the last of a three-part article (originally a lecture) by Mr. Ward; the second part appeared in our last issue.

We have said something, though of necessity we have been able to do no more than scratch the surface of them, about the general approach of religious drama and the necessary understanding of the relationship between religion and art, about plays and about the presentation and acting of those plays. I have the impression that, with so much that needs to be said under these heads, we have left those subjects before we have really begun upon them; that, I suppose, we cannot help. But, at the back of all that I have been saying I hope you may have been aware of oblique references to the point with which I began and with which I propose to end. Of all the elements of religious drama, it seems to me by far the most important, for it is the basis upon which the whole subject stands: I mean, of course, the relation between stage and auditorium, which may perhaps be called the " sociological " aspect of the art of the theatre—or, indeed, of any art, since all art is barren and pointless until it comes into contact with an audience of some kind.

The play and the players, says Cervantes, in the passage already quoted, show us " what we are and what we must come to ". Let us look again, also, at the passage already quoted from Jung, in which he says that the artist " speaks in primordial images "; he " elevates that which he treats out of the individual and transitory into the sphere of the eternal, he exalts the personal lot to the lot of man, and therewith he releases in us all those helpful forces that have enabled humanity to rescue itself from whatever distress and to live through even the longest night. . . ." In other words, he, like the play and the players, whom Cervantes considers " instruments of great good to the state ", " shows us what we are and what we must come to ".

I have said that religious drama seems to me at present to be being offered a very important opportunity. Consider the times in which we live, times of incredibly swift change, so swift that, while it has always been true for man to say that he lives in an age of transition, our own transition—from what is still too close behind us for us to be able to see it in proportion and define its exact nature, to what is so swiftly coming upon us that we have no time to examine it as it advances—is one which leaves us bewildered and helpless—the more so since the scientific habit of the immediate past and the flying present has overborne the older habit of faith. It is hardly surprising that a great many of us feel that there is nothing to believe in except perhaps the bare fact of bodily death—that life and nature have no purpose; that God is no more than a postulate, and morality merely old-fashioned. A shadow of dissolution, which five years of bitter warfare have only served to darken, hangs over us all; superficially, at least, we live in a negative age. But beneath the surface lies, I believe, a more positive hope; nature strives as ever to right the balance, and the more we feel driven to believe nothing, the more we feel driven to believe something. The question is, What? And the answer is, up to a point, surprisingly simple, for there is nothing we can believe except what men have always believed, however differently different ages may have expressed it; there is nothing new to believe; there are only new approaches to belief. And there lies the difficulty: what are these approaches, and how is this curious sense of the need to believe something to be clarified and made a channel for those forces which can put man back into relation with his God, his fellow men, and the natural world in which and by which he exists?

The approach, it seems to me, can be indicated by the word consciousness. An increase in consciousness is the great desideratum of our day. Consciousness, the progression from the instinctive knowledge of the child towards the adult's potential knowledge of God, is the path by which bewildered mankind can move forward, from a child's fear in face of the unknown, which seems to indicate that a barren death is the only alternative to its present existence, to the faith and understanding and certainty which give mankind assurance of a purpose in life, and indeed in death also. This increase in consciousness is, of course, achieved in many different ways by different individuals; but in all cases it comes upon the individual in the nature of a new birth, a breaking-through into a fuller understanding of life's meaning and

purpose. One of the causes of such new birth has in all times been the experience of suffering. That experience is in these years visiting, in one way or another, many thousands of persons; and for this reason alone religious drama must thank heaven for a magnificent opportunity, the opportunity of an increasing audience with minds and hearts opened by suffering to speculations about " what we are and what we must come to " : man's adversity, to alter the phrase a little, is art's opportunity. Men and women hitherto unassailably enclosed within limits of their own humdrum and unimaginative lives, have been suddenly thrown by the events of the past few years into experiences which they never dreamed would be theirs—the loss of their possessions; the loss of their nearest and dearest; the break-up of their working-lives, their marriages, their homes, their very bodies. And all these things, bitter and intolerable as they seem, are opportunities for the human spirit to grow, for consciousness and understanding to increase, for truth, beauty and goodness to enter, illumine and inspire minds and hearts hitherto dead and now re-born into a new and bewildering but infinitely promising world.

Now the arts know a great deal about this matter of consciousness and its enlargement; it has been their business, the business of artists and their fellow-mystics, from time immemorial; and the drama—and religious drama with it—has at present not only the obvious golden opportunity, but also a responsibility of the gravest and most glorious kind. It is no exaggeration to say that the future state of the world will depend, in a degree which would perhaps be surprising could we compute it, upon the way in which the arts discharge this responsibility; in their hand lies at least a part of the salvation of mankind from the darkness and decadence which have brought him to the murderous pass in which these years have found him. Indeed, Walter Pater went so far, in his *Renaissance*, as to claim that art is the end of life, for this very reason that it gives " a quickened, multiplied consciousness "; and in so far as we recognize the greatest art of all as the art of living, and consciousness as the ability to understand and live by divine laws, so that " every man's life of any worth ", in the words of Keats, " is a perpetual allegory ", as the life of Jesus was, we shall no doubt be able to share in Pater's belief.

Every materialistic era, such as that out of which we are just passing, brings into being a complementary spiritual problem; the last few decades have brought to birth the science of psychology to deal with the nature and health of the human psyche—for we have long been dimly aware that man cannot live by bread alone, that a knowledge of matter and a command of material resources would not be an adequate substitute for the spirit and would lead us in time to the catastrophe in which we now find ourselves. The spiritual problem is now urgent; psychology will no doubt play its part in the solution of it, for psychology, too, in its finer and more responsible aspects, is at work upon the necessary increase of consciousness, the necessary spiritualization of human creatures. But the arts' particular part in that spiritual problem's solution remains an opportunity and a responsibility. I hope that it now becomes apparent why I have taken so seriously the

questions of the intrinsic worth of the plays to be presented, of the sincerity and devotion of those who present them: the other half of the presentation is the audience, a few dozen, a few hundred, of our fellow-men, any one of whom may be in a condition of spirit to receive from the stage suggestions which may deeply influence his life. For a play is not, if it is worth anything, merely a spectacle in front of which a man sits uncaring. It is an experience, and experience, especially of profound emotion, opens the aperture of consciousness. It is an experience, furthermore, in which the audience actually joins; there is a mysterious and very powerful link of a psychological kind between audience and stage, a unity which it is the business of that unity on the stage—of which we have spoken—to strengthen and make significant. Any actor will tell you of the curious and profound awareness of his audience which he experiences upon the stage; he knows exactly what his audience feels; when it is, or is not, " held " by the play; indeed he can, if he chooses, play upon an audience in a way which can become very dangerous. This audience, its imaginative faculty brought into play by what passes before it, becomes an intrinsic part of the performance and opens up to the actor regions of its psyche which may be very deep, those regions where are to be found, reciprocating those which the artist who wrote the play discovered in himself, the " primordial images " of which Jung speaks, the essential truths of which we have spoken here as being at the basis of all art and all religion. Each member of the audience identifies himself with the persons of the story, sees in the persons of the story, as in a mirror, his own nature and his own soul exposed, sees what he is and what he must be.

It stands to reason that the responsibility laid upon those who practise religious drama on behalf of these gullible, malleable and trustfully questioning humans, many of them at present bewildered and uprooted and afraid, almost all of them in a speculative mood, is by no means a light one. Is the superficial, the perfunctory, the tawdry, whether in writing, acting or presentation generally, good enough to offer our fellow men? Is propaganda, the advancement of sectarian opinion or facile dogma good enough? I think the answer must be in the negative, and that we shall do no harm to repeat to ourselves Kennedy's words, " If religion and art conspire in lying, how is the world ever going to be saved? " No, we must search our own souls, enquire of our great artists and mystics, indeed go on our knees to the source of all truth, until we have satisfied ourselves that whatever we are offering to a humanity pitifully eager to understand—in Blake's phrase, " to cleanse the doors of perception "—and to find a set of references by which to live the new life into which they are finding themselves born after the experiences of these days, is indeed worthy of them. The first commandment is the same for all artists and all men of religion, but the second is like unto it and its inevitable corollary: our audiences are our neighbours, and it is for this reason that the relation between stage and auditorium is of so much importance. A divine imperative has been put upon Religious Drama: " In as much as ye have done it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto Me."

BIRMINGHAM SUMMER SCHOOL

(Birmingham, August 30–September 6.)

WELCOME

(A message from E. MARTIN BROWNE.)

I send a very warm welcome to all who have come to this first National School held by The Religious Drama Society since the war. For myself, I am exceedingly sorry not to be with you; but for you the prospect is all the wider and more enlivening in that you have new friends to make both on the teaching staff and in the admirable officers whom the Society has acquired since last year. The presence on the staff of Pamela Keily makes a happy link with the splendid school she ran at Sheffield: and the best we can hope is to emulate her success. In these gatherings, and the smaller ones in various localities which are also organized by our Travelling Adviser, we seek to perfect ourselves in the arts and crafts of acting, production and decor, and then to learn how to offer what we have achieved to the glory and the will of God. We want to do the very best of which the theatre is capable, in the spirit of loving service. In this week you will all grow together in that common endeavour. God bless it to you!

ONE VIEW

Well. It 's over. What was it like? What remains?

It was like nothing else: and it is impossible to write about it except personally, as a student.

To those unused to community life there were painful elements: turbulent meals, the ceaseless pressure of other people's idiosyncrasies, the constant demands made on one for attention to aesthetic, intellectual, theological or personal problems: the scant time for reflection or solitude in which to recover from these impacts. In addition, we were trying to do, ourselves, things we had never done before, or (worse) things we had once known how to do but forgotten, or (worst) things we were sure we could do and found we couldn't—not at all.

Those more adaptable to life in community fared a little better perhaps, but many of these found a dislocating reversal of rôles prepared for them—the elocution teacher smarting under correction of her verse-speaking, the Vicar hard put to play a devil, the head of a woman's college asked to cackle like a hen—more than one of us had to remind ourselves that we had come perfectly voluntarily!

Yet would we have missed it? No. That's certain. Not even if, interdenominational gathering that we were, we winced at hearing a clergyman called Father, or fidgetted at the extempore prayer of a minister—I don't think there was one of us who would have missed it.

Why? Partly because the visiting lecturers gave us an intellectual banquet—no other word for it, and in an austerity world banquets are rare. These lecturers, all experts, did us the honour of talking to us as if we were their equals in intelligence lacking only their specialized knowledge.

After Sir Barry Jackson's gracefully phrased opening address, we began the lectures with Hugh Ross Williamson's deliberate putting of the cat among the pigeons. He concluded a provocative speech by saying that the ultimate question we had to ask ourselves when considering Religious Drama was, Ought we to do it at all? For part of the audience his Anglo-Catholic orthodoxy may have seemed rather rigid and his warnings a trifle dispiriting: but as we all knew how much of his own talent and energies are spent as a playwright we were only superficially downcast. Sunday opened threateningly so far as the title of its lecture was concerned. More alarm and despondency, this time from the Editorial Secretary of S.P.C.K.? But no: here was a discourse in which the strictest theological thinking was lit by a kind of fiery humility, so that Mr. Davey won us to full agreement over the first theological principle underlying Religious Drama, namely, that whatever the plot, the Hero must be God. He did not underestimate the dangers—he called his address "Playing with Fire from Heaven", but maintained that so long as we realized what we were doing, and were doing it from the right motives, and to the very best of our abilities —then we should risk the dangers. Amplifying and yet balancing the warnings of Ross Williamson, this lecture set the tone of all that followed.

What a lot did follow!

A brilliantly funny talk by Susan Richmond on Production; shrewd, hard-hitting, accomplished to the last inflexion. "Don't (how reproduce the agony of voice?). *Dohnt*, *ever*, let *any*one persuade you that all these little bits and pieces of—of—of *Charades*, amateurs do, have *any* relation to the *exacting*—the per*pet*ually exacting, art of the theatre —they are helpful, and they are fun: but they are *not* acting."

We needed that admonition, some of us.

Then Eric Newton and Stella Mary Pearce dealing, between them, with the visual side of the Theatre. They both wear their erudition so lightly and take beginners into their confidence with such grace, that you can hardly believe that you didn't know a word of the subject before they began. We enjoyed every sentence they uttered, and if Miss Pearce, with her shattering "bruise-and-bless" * technique, has wholly destroyed our Nativity play wardrobe by revealing that *all* the costumes we use are Arab not Jewish—well, we can take it, at her hands. There were several other lectures. Dr. Edmund on "Music in Drama"; Michael Sims-Williams on "Religious Education Through Free Improvization"; the Rev. R. G. Myers on "Drama as Christian Witness", and Oliver Wilkinson on "Experimental Drama in the

* "Like the swinging May cloud that pelts the flowers with hailstones,
Off a sunny border, she was made to bruise and bless . . ."

Church ": all good, all varied; and a delicious demonstration-lecture, ending with a suddenly most moving mime, from Doreen Woodcock.

But space is short. We must express, in a bumbling sort of way, something of our admiration of the teaching staff. I don't know how they kept their heads or their tempers with us, unless because they knew we knew how awful we were.

We remember Susan Richmond, pounding an amorphous mass of earnest endeavour into a purposeful, bustling crowd in a scene from *The Man Born to be King*; Pamela Keily hypnotizing us into performing impossible feats of imagination, in *Go Down, Moses*; R. H. Ward bringing heroic fortitude to bear on us, while we chirruped or boomed or stammered through our choral verse-speaking (he was the delightful deputy who responded to an S.O.S. when the day before the course opened, Clive Sansom was unfortunately taken seriously ill) and the small figure of Doreen Woodcock, like a linnet mothering a brood of cuckoos, as she showed us once again the mime we were groping after. Do you know that, with the capacity to do so bubbling inside her, she never once mimicked our clumsinesses? How is that for restraint?

That was in class. Of course we couldn't be anything but a pain to them all when it came to performance, but that didn't matter. We knew how much we'd learned.

And then there was the fun of meeting all the others—the meal-time arguments, the autobiographical thumbnail sketches we gave each other: "No, *I'm* from San Francisco; won't you have my potato?" "In Papua, at the ritual eating of pig we used . . ." "So I hitch-hiked here from Carlisle ... ." "But how *can* you let fifty twelve-year-olds *improvize*?" "Don't know about you, but Religious Drama makes me terribly *hungry*," and so on.

What remains? Three things, for me. An expanded understanding of the Fellowship of the Holy Spirit. All this nonsense and fun was the froth and spray over deep seas. We knew, a little, from what Source our instructors drew their gentleness and their gaiety, and they knew the reasons which prompted shy men and women to make a "gazing stock" of themselves. We knew we were really all trying to do the same thing, and for many of us the early Service each morning and Compline each evening shine like thin gold threads holding the whole string of memories together.

Second, there remains a belief that this school is only a beginning, and a determination, quite simply, to collect together the hard cash to put R.D.S. on a sound financial basis.

For the last thing that remains is an echo of Noel Davey's words: "The drama of the Liturgy a re-enactment of the events of the Incarnation, Passion and Resurrection of Christ: That, Itself, a re-enactment in the fleshly mode, of the vast cosmic drama of Creator and creature." From that stupendous height to *us*, in Factoryville or Dudgeon-cum-Muddiford, us, and our niggling little Nativity play? Dare we? Ought we? Yes. We've got to risk it, God help us.

ANOTHER VIEW

I have been asked to give my impressions of the 1947 Birmingham School of Religious Drama from two points of view: of a student who attended Sheffield last summer, and of a Free Churchman. While I find that I am driven to deal with these two aspects separately, I do also find that my impressions coincide to a certain extent and I wish to record this at once. " Balance " is the word which seems best suited to record my feeling to both aspects of my briefing. A balance has been struck in a remarkable way, so it seems to me, between the needs of a student attending such a school for the first time, and one returning for further instruction; so too, I think, has regard been paid to the differing traditions of Churchmanship. I shall go away feeling that there has been something for everybody. Whether this has been aimed at I do not know, but anyhow the result has been achieved; and looking at this from both angles I cannot help being grateful.

And now let me try to set down my impressions separately.

Taking the Sheffield student's point of view first, the thing that strikes me most is that Birmingham has added much to what had already been gained at Sheffield, and in particular in two ways. Attention has been drawn here at Birmingham to the importance of the " visual " side of our work and at the same time a great deal has been added to the theological understanding of the task that we have set ourselves. On the one hand, even if we have become aware of the distance we have to go to arrive at a satisfactory " decor " for our productions, at least we now have some principles with which to work in making the best of the " bits and pieces " that are at our disposal. On the other hand, there ought to be now no doubt in our mind as to what must in some way or another be apparent to our audience, and that is, that God alone is the Hero of our play—that thought in itself is to me invaluable.

At this point I must record that I have been aware of a freshness of attack upon our problems, both on the part of those members of the staff from whom we had already learned so much at Sheffield, as well as in the instruction of the producers under whom we were working for the first time. If Sheffield be regarded as a first attempt to help us to raise the standard of Religious Drama, Birmingham has shown that the foundations were well laid and much could be built upon them.

And now I must turn to my impressions from the other angle. Here perhaps the first thing that gripped my attention has been the choice of play. Technically Religious Drama, whether given in Church, Chapel or hall, is governed by the same rules of production, but our type of Churchmanship demands a shift of emphasis and differentiation in the aims pursued. But for all this there is a broad Christian tradition common to us all, that makes interchange of plays among the Churches possible. It is what is common to us all that has dictated the choice of material, I feel; and I should have no fear (assuming that drama is acceptable in itself) of commending what we have been shown to any Church of my own or an allied order. This said, I have felt the charm of doing things in unity; and perhaps in this, the arrangements made for sustaining the devotional life of the School played an important

part. As Free Churchmen we have been able to worship in our accustomed way, but we have also been given opportunity to share in ways of approach to God not so familiar. A word of appreciation is surely due here of the work of the Chaplains in this matter and the thought given to the discharge of their duties. As a Free Churchman I have felt at home, but my vision has been enlarged. There is a "oneness" in Christ that I have been made to feel and I can only thank God for the experience.

It may be that in this School some of us have taken the first step in a "more excellent way"; it may be that we have come another day's journey along the road we are travelling together; for both beginner and improver Birmingham will remain as an inspiration and an encouragement. Our problems have been understood and tackled, and new possibilities for the use of drama opened up. We are all debtors to those who have so faithfully served us.

IVAN E. MOORE.

SURE?

One of the criticisms levelled against Religious Drama enthusiasts is that they don't know the great religious dramas, or worse, can't distinguish a religious play from a moral one. What about these passages? Of course you *know the sources; but just in case, we've put answers on page* 23. *We leave you to decide on the plays' fitness for R.D.S. bookshelves.*

1. "My heart is harden'd, I cannot repent;
Scarce can I name salvation, faith, or heaven,
Swords, poisons, halters and envenomed steel
Are laid before me to despatch myself,
And long ere this I should have done the deed
Had not sweet pleasure conquered deep despair."

2. "Of Life only is there no end: and though of its million starry mansions many are empty and many still unbuilt, and though its vast domain is as yet unbearably desert, my seed shall one day fill it and master its matter to its uttermost confines. And for what may be beyond the eyesight of Lilith is too short. It is enough that there *is* a beyond."

3. " I shall show you how it is ;
Commanded I am to go a long journey,
A long way, hard and dangerous,
And give a strait count without delay
Before the high judge, Adonai."

4. " But the people dance light-footed,
Heedless by the dizzy brink;
Where the soul should cry and shrink,
None has vision to perceive
What uptowering guilt is rooted
In that little word; we live."

5. " To suffer woes which Hope thinks infinite;
To forgive wrongs darker than death or night;
To defy Power, which seems omnipotent;
To love and bear; to hope till Hope creates
Out of its wreck the thing it contemplates. . . .
This, like thy glory, Titan, is to be
Good, great, and joyous, beautiful, and free,
This is alone Life, Joy, Empire, and Victory ! "

6. " And, which is best and happiest yet, all this
With God not parted from him, as was feared
But favouring and assisting to the end.
Nothing is here for tears, nothing to wail
Or knock the breast, no weakness, no contempt,
Dispraise or blame; nothing but well and fair,
And what may quiet us in a death so noble."

NEWS OF THE OTHERS

STAR TURNS

We select as star turns for this issue two accounts which show the wide variety of work as well as the geographical distance Christian drama can cover.

North-West Frontier Province, India.

The greatest social evil in the bare tribal areas of the North-West Frontier district, between India and Afghanistan, is a custom which the people themselves call *buddi*. We would call it the vendetta or blood-feud. Quarrels among Pathans (the name given to the people of these parts) are frequent; and as every man carries a rifle and a belt of ammunition, someone easily gets " bumped off " before a dispute about the course of a stream, carrying the water which makes life possible, or some other vital matter, such as the abduction of a village girl, is settled. Once someone has been killed it is up to the relations to make sure that revenge is taken. And the feud continues down the generations—long after anyone remembers how it all began.

I am a member of the staff of the Church Missionary Society's College, within a few miles of the Khyber Pass, in the town of Peshawar. Over 400 students, between the ages of seventeen and twenty-four, come to the college, and many of them are involved in these vendettas. Life in a Christian college soon makes the majority of them feel that this venerable custom of theirs is foolish, wasteful and wrong. One student became so convinced about it that he told some of us he would write to his brother, a chieftain, and end an old dispute. He did so. Later he went a step further and refrained from handing a family enemy over to the police, though this enemy had killed a boy, entirely by mistake, in the course of a wedding celebration. (A rifle had accidentally gone off and the unfortunate boy happened to be in the way.)

This same young man then had another good idea. Could we not turn the story of a blood-feud forgiven and ended into a play, and act it for all to see?

We sat down, and between us we dramatized the story. Since then it has been acted in the Pushtu language, which is spoken on the Frontier, before most appreciative audiences. The author took the leading part, which was easy, as it represented his own actual deeds. Indians are born actors, and the whole performance went with a bang —in two senses of the word, for plenty of " blanks " were fired (once too near the ear of another actor, which necessitated a five minutes' interval while he recovered).

The play has been printed and is having a good sale in book form. More performances are expected when the students have finished examinations.

We took a photograph in which the author of the play is seen on the left at the moment of reconciliation with his smiling enemy. In the middle is the reconciler, who brought them together, and argued the case that it demands more courage to *refrain* from pulling the trigger when you have your enemy in your power than to shoot. This is the

point of the play, for the Pathan fears above all to be laughed at as " chicken-hearted ".

Maybe the play will " get it across " after these centuries of bloodshed. At any rate it is worth trying—and great fun too!

KENNETH W. S. JARDINE.

New Zealand.

The Religious Drama Society in New Zealand received its inspiration from an Anglican youth conference in the Wellington Diocese in 1944, when the writer gave some lectures on drama and produced the morality play *Everyman*.

The Society was formed later in the same year with the dual object of producing religious drama and of assisting other groups with a similar object. In the first year we produced *A Man's House* and *Child in Flanders* and organized a religious drama festival and a play-writing competition. Since then our major productions have been *The Kingdom of God*, *Tobias and the Angel*, *Good Friday* and *Murder in the Cathedral*.

We now have a membership of about 350 with some thirty Affiliated Groups. We are not without our problems, most of which rise from the fact that our members are actively engaged in Church affairs and cannot give the time that drama demands. As all our most competent producers and actors are also members of large repertory societies, this creates another serious conflict of loyalties. However, the performance of *Murder in the Cathedral* under the direction of Maria Dronke was such an outstanding success that we received a new lease of life.

The production was magnificently conceived and, with the beautiful setting of the Cathedral Church of St. Paul, was a thrilling experience. Sam Williams, who at one time designed for the Old Vic in London, designed the costumes for us and took the lead. The Church was packed for each of the six performances and there is no doubt that the play has put us on the map.

Our next major production is to be another T. S. Eliot play, *Family Reunion*, and it is to be produced by Maria Dronke. We anticipate that this production will establish the position we attained with our last play and will place us in a much stronger position both in membership and in our claim on the loyalty of members.

Our library is embarrassed with the requests from small groups all over all the Dominion for playing sets. It is a slow business building a library, but we are most appreciative of the assistance we have received from the R.D.S. at home. Your issues of *Christian Drama* are a great help to us.

We have a long way to go before we come near to reaching our goal of giving a full service to the many Church groups who look to us for assistance in their productions of religious plays, but we are at least progressing in the right direction. With our major productions it is our aim not so much to provide activity for our members as to present plays with a competence as worthy as we can make them of the purpose for which we exist.

Perhaps our greatest accomplishment has been in finding a medium of Christian expression in which those of practically every denomination can take part without self-consciousness. *Murder in the Cathedral* was produced in an Anglican Church by a Roman Catholic with many denominations represented in the cast, while the performances were witnessed by people with a still wider divergence of belief and disbelief. This, to my way of thinking, is a worth-while result.

FRANCIS W. PAGE.

All the Rest.

Only a few notes for this issue: everybody is waiting for Christmas.

Poole and Parkstone Centre. Our Annual General Meeting on May 31st was held at Lytchett Manor, the beautiful home of our President, Lady Lees. Mr. T. G. Bartholomew, R.D.S. Secretary, kindly came from London, at a most pressing time of work, to be our guest and speaker; and by his interesting "talk" and friendly approach added much to the pleasure of the occasion.

In June, St. Aldhelm's parish put on a new play, *Holy Thorn*; Mrs. Hilliar, of the Centre, producing. This play "came across" well, and was actually commended by various spectators unbiassed by ties of kinship with the players! . . .

Correspondent, H. M. RICHARDS.

Reading, Trinity Congregational Church. On Sunday, July 13th, 1947, as part of our 101st Anniversary celebrations, a performance of *The Cup*, by Doris M. Gill, was given in the church. Apart from a reading of *Michael*, by Tolstoi, this was our first attempt at the production of a religious play. Skilfully draped counterpanes of bright colours for the men, and white for the one female character made effective Eastern costumes. The minimum amount of scenery was used—a few screens hid the pulpit and reading-desk, and the three steps leading up to the platform between these two suggested the Upper Room, where all the action took place. The play consists of three acts—the first taking place immediately before, and the second immediately after, the Last Supper, and the last a few weeks after the Resurrection.

The characters are: The Innkeeper and his blind daughter Elizabeth, his son John Mark and the disciples Peter and John. The message of the play is the gradual realization on the part of these disciples of the Lordship of Christ, and the real nature of His Kingdom.

All who saw the play found it deeply moving, and commented on the reverent spirit in which it was performed. Those taking part found, as they had been told through the pages of *Christian Drama* that they would, that to act in a play of this nature is a very real and valuable spiritual experience, and are eager to do even more in the future in this way (new for Reading), of spreading the Gospel in this town.

The play was made much more effective by the inclusion of suitable music played on the organ at the beginning and end of each scene, and by the fact that the whole was treated as a religious service in which the audience could take part.

They joined in the singing of the well-known hymns, "Ye fair green hills of Galilee," and "There is a green hill far away," and listened to our minister's readings from St. Mark's Gospel.

The whole was brought to a fitting climax by triumphal music leading into "In the Cross of Christ I glory".

Correspondent, M. GRIGSBY.

Banstead at Farnham. The Farnham week-end was very interesting. The students rehearsed Act 1 from *Murder in the Cathedral* and we hope that they will want to produce it themselves now. From letters received, it seems that the course was particularly valuable owing to its bias being Religious Drama—most students being actors or producers in Church Youth Clubs.

Correspondent, EDWARD THOMPSON.

Leicester Diocesan Group. A Religious Drama Convention was held on May 17th at St. George's Hall, arranged by the Leicester Diocesan Committee under its Chairman, Canon Linwood Wright, with Miss Carina Robins as Lecturer.

Over 100 people were present from all parts of the county—the country parishes featuring as much as the town. During the afternoon our number of affiliated parishes rose from nineteen to twenty-three.

After the opening by the Lord Bishop of Leicester, Miss Robins spoke on the "History of Religious Drama and how it is being used to-day".

This was followed by a play, Tolstoi's *Michael*, by the young people of St. Mary's, Knighton, produced by the Rev. T. C. Daybell. Miss Robins afterwards gave a very useful constructive criticism and a talk on production in general.

The afternoon ended with a practical session on "Choral Speaking".

Our thanks for a most enjoyable and successful afternoon are due to Miss Robins, who inspired us all to tackle Religious Drama with renewed enthusiasm.

Correspondent, MARY RUMSEY.

Northern Ireland. Proposed Programme for winter, from Belfast, a series of lectures: (1) General Aspect of Religious Drama; (2) Acting and Characterization; (3) Stagecraft; (4) Setting; (5) Lighting; (6) Production.

Correspondent, K. MCLAURIN.

Durham. During 1947 the Durham County Fellowship of Religion and Drama has been responsible for an extensive County tour of *The Prodigal Son*, by Richard Ward, performing first in the ideal setting of Bede College Chapel, Durham, and then in the churches of Spennymoor, Heighington, Ferryhill, Sunderland, Billingham, Sedgefield, Craghead, West Hartlepool, Sacriston, Bishop Auckland and finally in Timothy Hackworth Modern School, Shildon.

The cast, though personally enthusiastic about the quality of the play, had doubts in the beginning about its reception by village congregations unused to modern verse plays, but these were quickly dispelled by the very definite appreciation and understanding shown in the quiet, absorbed concentration of the audience and keen, warm comments afterwards.

The members of the anonymous casts are drawn from all parts of the County and from various denominations, though the majority are Anglican. All have given ungrudgingly of time and leisure to rehearsals and touring under conditions of considerable difficulty, particularly in the long, stormy period, when only one performance was cancelled because of impassable roads.

The Fellowship also gave a demonstration programme of Religious Drama during a Training Course at Bede College. This included Act I of *Nicodemus* (Andrew Young), Act I of *The Prodigal Son* (Richard Ward), a dramatized carol, *The Angel Gabriel* and an original mime, *The Finding of Moses*.

Senior boys and girls of Whinney Hill Modern Schools, Durham, under the tuition of the County Drama Organizer, gave three Nativity mimes at a Christmas service in Durham Cathedral conducted by Archdeacon Lucas, when the Cathedral was packed with parents and children.

The Sixth Forms of Durham Grammar Schools, in Bede College Chapel, gave a Commentary on the Passion in Verse and Mime, written and produced by the County Drama Organizer. This formed the central theme of a beautiful service, conducted by the Principal and Chaplain of Bede College.

In the County Schools, especially in R.C. Schools, religious drama is being increasingly used in scripture periods and in end-of-term programmes.

There is abundant evidence at all ages of a renaissance of interest in religious drama, but there are as yet far too few skilled leaders and producers to guide this interest into genuinely productive and creative channels.

D. R. W. C.

Salisbury. Under the auspices of the Salisbury Diocesan Religious Drama Fellowship, a successful School of Religious Drama has been held at Harcombe House, Uplyme, Lyme Regis. Lectures were given on Mediaeval and Modern Religious Drama by Dr. Elsie Smith and Miss Evelyn Hart, M.A., respectively; on acting and producing by Miss Joan Yeaxbe, former County Drama Adviser for Wilts, and by Mr. Rodney Bennett of Budleigh Salterton; and on the history of Music in Drama by Mr. Christopher le Fleming, of the Wilts Rural Music School. A demonstration of religious films was given by the Rev. J. Mortimer, of the Church of England Films Commission.

The arrangements for the school, which occupied a week, were made by Miss Frances Barton, Hon. Secretary of the Fellowship, and the domestic side was organized by Mrs. Stansfield and the Misses Barton. The Rev. R. Wells, of St. Aldhelm's, Branksome, was resident Chaplain, and Lady Richmond was the hostess.

About forty students attended from all over the Diocese and outside it.

The week proved both instructive and inspiring and all who attended were imbued not only with a spirit of real fellowship, but with a true sense of joyousness.

Liverpool. *Winwick Deanery Drama Course.* The first of what we hope will be a series of Deanery Drama Courses was held at Earlestown on Tuesday evenings in August. About twenty-five people from all over the Deanery came and this was a very manageable number.

Lectures were given on Production, Stage-managing, Stage Lighting, Make-up, together with two short lectures on Religious Drama in the parish and in the theatre.

Each evening there was a demonstration production of Part I, scene 3, of *Go Down, Moses*, which by the end of four weeks had become live and convincing.

The course was well worth while and great enthusiasm was shown. It also certainly solved the travelling difficulty, being within the confines of a single Deanery.

Sheffield. The Religious Drama Committee of the Association of Christian Communities in Sheffield presented *The Old Man of the Mountains*, by Norman Nicholson, in the Central Library Theatre on Tuesday, October 14th, and Wednesday, October 15th, at 7.30 p.m., and in The Y.W.C.A. Hall on Saturday, October 18th, 2.30 and 7.30 p.m., and Sunday, October 19th, at 8.15 p.m. Pamela Keily produced.

Fairhaven, Lancs. Fairhaven Methodist Players have been in existence for a long time. During the past few years we have tackled *The Foolishness of God* and *Poverty* with the grown-ups, while the children have given *Simon*, *The Flight* and *The Children of Galilee*, together with an original nativity pageant and choral drama. We are hoping to produce another play soon as part of one of the regular services. Our stage resources are good and we are prepared to be reasonably adventurous !

LEONARD E. DOVE.

Swindon. Swindon Religious Music and Drama Fellowship (President, Canon C. F. Harman), presented *Elijah*, by L. Du Garde Peach, with music by Mendelssohn, in St. Paul's Church, September 29th—October 2nd, and in St. Barnabas' Church, October 6th—8th.

Correspondent, HON. SECRETARY.

Mirfield. The Quarry Theatre in the Community grounds at Mirfield provided an admirable setting for the performance of Dorothy L. Sayers' *The Zeal of Thy House*. Against this natural background of tree and stone the mediaeval drama was presented with a simplicity and a unity which were a tribute to the skill of the producer, Mrs. Helen Lamb, and the co-operative effort of every member of the company of student actors. The action moved swiftly and smoothly. From the opening scene, when Archangels and Recording Angel showed forth the nature of the tragedy about to be

enacted, the vigorous dialogue conveyed with flashes of penetrating humour that all human aspiration is fatally mixed with self-regarding motives. The central drama was played out with that most moving of protagonists, a man weighed down by the force of his own ambition and ruthless pride, while the final triumph, through suffering, justified the ways of God to men. This great theme spoke to the twentieth century of the perpetual conflict between human desire and the divine purpose, such as is seen under different forms in the contemporary world.

Excellent singing and clear diction, even under the difficulties of open-air production, characterized the performance. A production proving the value of religious drama as a powerful medium of Christian teaching for a modern audience.

Correspondent, MILDRED A. DOBSON.

R.D.S. NEWS AND NOTICES

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING.

All members are earnestly invited to attend the Annual General Meeting of Members of the Society which is called for FRIDAY, 21ST NOVEMBER, 1947, at 2.30 p.m., in the MERCURY THEATRE, Ladbroke Road, Notting Hill Gate, London, W. 11.

Instead of a guest speaker, after the business is done, the Executive Committee hope to offer the meeting a performance, on the Mercury stage, of a short religious play to be given by a group of members. *Drama Christi*, under the direction of Rev. Rex Parkin, have kindly agreed to present *The Marriage of St. Francis*, by Henri Ghéon. The performance will take about half-an-hour. It is thought that members will find this an interesting and welcome innovation.

This is the only intimation members will receive of the meeting, so please make a note of the time and place now. Please come if you possible can and so help to make it a really representative occasion.

The business of the meeting, at which Miss Athene Seyler hopes to preside, will be: (1) To elect Councillors. (2) To consider the following Resolution, put forward by the Executive Committee: *That Para.* 5 *(a) of the Constitution which at present reads* " The administration of the Society and disposition of its funds shall be vested in a Council who shall be elected annually " *be amended by the substitution of the words* " every three years " *in the place of the word* " annually ". (3) To receive a review of the Society's present position and prospects by the Hon. Director, Mr. E. Martin Browne.

SCHOOLS FUND.

Elsewhere in this issue may be found reports on this year's R.D. Summer School at Birmingham. These show—and all who attended there will agree—that it's success was indicative of the great need that the School attempted to serve, and it seems clear that what was begun at Sheffield and continued at Birmingham must go on: the R.D.S. Summer School must become an annual affair. Plans are therefore being laid for next summer.

But, owing to certain factors beyond our control, Birmingham was not full to capacity, and so (although fees paid by students were fairly high) the Society lost money on the venture. This became known during the week of the school; by the end of it well over half the deficit was made good by gifts from the students themselves. Since then further donations have been added to make the present total (at the time of going to press) £99. It is significant that nearly all these gifts were made anonymously—a reminder that our thanks for them, as for so much besides, are due to Him who so richly blessed the efforts of all concerned in that memorable week.

The money is being put to a Schools Fund; with the first call on the Fund—the redeeming of the loss incurred at Birmingham—fully met, a small credit balance remains for future use. It is the hope of your Executive that this Fund—so readily and generously begun by those who attended the School—will grow so that it will be possible not only to keep down to a minimum the fees for future schools, but even to grant bursaries in special cases to intending students who otherwise might be debarred through inability to pay the full fees.

Members are, therefore, cordially invited to send contributions to this fund. Any amount from the smallest (2s. 6d. from each member would bring in £125) to the largest (no limit) will be welcome. Please send your gift to the Secretary, R.D.S., S.P.C.K. House, Northumberland Avenue, W.C. 2, marked " Schools Fund ".

TRAVELLING ADVISER'S NOTES. Miss Robins reports :—

Organizing the Summer School at Birmingham took a good deal of time during the summer, but I gave various talks and lectures about the country. Amongst these:—

Brighton. A conference on July 21st called by Dr. Bell, the Bishop of Chichester and President of R.D.S., to reorganize the work of Religious Drama in his diocese.

Bournemouth. Deputizing for Mr. Martin Browne, who was ill, I gave two lectures at the British Drama League Summer School here, on August 9th, and 10th.

Truro. On September 25th I spoke at a meeting here arranged by Miss C. Murray Andrews of St. Ives. The audience was representative of various churches and drama organizations throughout Cornwall. It is hoped that a County Religious Drama Association will now be formed with the Bishop as President.

Autumn engagements are numerous. Here is a summary of the more important:—

Burnley, Lancs. A one-day school of Religious Drama has been arranged for October 11th by Mrs. Burniston, Acting County Drama Organizer, and the County Drama Committee. The instructors will be Mrs. Burniston and myself.

Oxford. Lieut.-Col. Grant, Vice-Chairman of our Executive, has arranged a conference for October 15th, at which I am supporting Mr. Martin Browne, who will be the chief speaker. The occasion is the inauguration of the Oxford County Religious Drama Council, to which many denominations and organizations will belong.

Southwark. " Making Things Interesting " is the title of a conference to be held at Woodlands, Caterham, from October 13th–17th under the auspices of the Diocesan Adult Religious Education Council. I have been asked to take two sessions on Religious Drama on the final day.

Durham. At the invitation of the Youth chaplain, I am spending eight days from October 20th visiting youth centres in the diocese to talk and advise about Religious Drama.

Bexhill. Two local meetings, on November 4th and 5th.

Putney. I have undertaken the production of a Nativity play, *The House of David*, arranged by Ruth Spalding, to be given by a cast drawn from the three churches of this large parish.

Play Production Course. Members within reach of Central London will be interested in the six sessions for amateur producers, arranged by the U.C.M.E. Plays Group in conjunction with R.D.S., which are being held at the Alliance Hall, Palmer Street, S.W. 1, from 7 to 8.30 p.m. Several sessions have already taken place; the remaining dates are Monday, October 27th, Monday, November 3rd and Thursday, November 13th. The instructor throughout is Mr. Wilton J. Anstey, Producer and

Lecturer for the B.D.L. and R.D.S. We strongly recommend this course. Applications should be made to U.C.M.E. Plays Group, Edinburgh House, 2 Eaton Gate, S.W. 1.

Lost Property. The following articles were left behind at University House, Birmingham, after the School, and may be claimed on application to R.D.S. office: red plush table-cloth; small brown curtain on rod; green Turkish towel; long white petticoat; sack and odd pieces of hessian; drum-stick; small lantern.

LIBRARY.

The following books have been added to the Library since July:—

Plays

**Beginners Please* Edited by J. COMPTON. Methuen & Co. Ltd. Reprint. 2/9.
A collection of short plays for boys and girls, including *Ruth the Gleaner*, by MONA SWANN.

**The Curtain Rises.* Edited by J. COMPTON. Methuen & Co. Ltd. Reprint. 2/6.
Includes *Piers Plowman's Pilgrimage*, by Mr. G. K. CHESTERTON and *The Travelling Man*, by LADY GREGORY.

Embassy Successes, 1946. Sampson Low, Marston & Co. Ltd. 8/6 each.
Vol. I includes *Skipper Next to God.* JAN DE HARTOG.
Vol. II includes *Father Malachy's Miracle.* BRIAN DOHERTY, from BRUCE MARSHALL'S novel.

Green Pastures. MARC CONNOLLY. Penguin Books Ltd. 1941 Edition.

He Saved Others. JASON S. WRIGHT. Independent Press Ltd. 1946. 2/-. 13 m., 3 w., narrator. Three acts.

**Peasants' Priest.* LAURIE LEE. Canterbury Festival Play based on the Serfs' Rebellion of 1381. H. J. Goulden Ltd., Canterbury. 1947. 2/6. 16 m., 2 w. Full length.

**Jonah.* CEDRIC MOUNT. Play Rights and Publications Ltd. 1/3. 5 m., 3 w. One act.

**Seed of Adam.* CHARLES WILLIAMS. In *Christendom*, September, 1937. One act.

New Sets

Christ's Comet. CHRISTOPHER HASSALL.
**Fine Linen.* H. M. RICHARDS.
**Poor Man's Miracle.* MARIAN HEMAR.
**St. Joan.* BERNARD SHAW.

Reference books

The Amateur and the Theatre. BONAMY DOBREE. Hogart Essays: 3rd series. Hogarth Press. 1947.

**Effective Speaking.* J. G. MARASH. Illustrated by GWENDOLINE PERKINS. George G. Harrap & Co. 1947. 5/-.

**The Complete Acted Play* from Script to Final Curtain. ALLEN CRAFTON and JESSICA ROYEN. George G. Harrap & Co. Ltd. 12/6.

**A History of English Costume.* 1066–1906. Illustrated. IRIS BROOKE. Methuen & Co. 2nd Edition. 1946. 12/6.

**How to Start a Speech Choir.* MARGERY H. HAZELL. National Society and S.P.C.K. 1947. 6d.

The Other Theatre. NORMAN MARSHALL. John Lehmann. 1947. 15/-.

The Real Shakespeare. A Counterblast to Commentators. WILLIAM BLISS. Sidgwick & Jackson. 1947. 18/-.

* *Included in recommended list.*

**Spoken Poetry in the Schools.* MARJORIE GULLAN. Methuen & Co. 8th Edition. 1947. 4/-.

**Stage Lighting for Amateurs.* PETER GOFFIN. Frederick Muller, 2nd Edition. 1947. 7/6.

Typescripts available

**The Castle of Perseverance.* Fifteenth-century morality arranged by IWA LANGENTELS. Full length.

**The Fight with the Dragon.* A morality in verse by EVELYN FRANCIS. Eight characters. Two scenes.

**The House by the Stable.* CHARLES WILLIAMS. (An allegory in one act.) The scene is in a man's house on the one side and in its stable on the other. Characters: Man, Pride, Hell, Gabriel, Joseph and Mary. Presentation by amateurs at present restricted.

**In Three Days.* The author has anonymously and generously given all rights in this play to the R.D.S., who are publishing it. Outstanding for its simplicity, scriptural truth, natural dialogue and fine characterization. Here is a small-cast Passion-Eastertide play with the emphasis where it should be. Three scenes (all in one set). 5 m., 5 w. Playing time 70 minutes. Copies will be available by Christmas.

**Mask of the Three Kings.* JOYCE BIDDELL. 7 m., 1 w. and Chorus of Dryads or Tree Spirits. The scene is in the Wood of Time. Imaginative treatment of the quest of the Magi with some fine lyrical poetry. Playing time, 1¼ hours. In process of publication by S.P.C.K. for R.D.S.

Nehushtan. WILLIAM LAMB. Three acts. 11 w., 1 g., 2 m., 2 b. A modern story written on the theme of the brazen serpent, which brought healing, but later was used idolatrously.

A Library Sub-Committee has been formed consisting of Rev. Robert Duce (Chairman), Miss Freda Collins, Rev. John Mortimer and Miss Jessie Powell. The Committee will advise and assist the Librarian regarding all matters connected with the library, particularly that of selecting plays for inclusion in the recommended list.

Answers to the Quiz, p. 13

(1) Faustus, Marlowe's *Tragedy of Dr. Faustus.* (2) Lilith, G. B. Shaw's *Back to Methuselah.* (3) Everyman. (4) Brand, Ibsen's *Brand.* (5) Demogorgon, Shelley's *Prometheus Unbound.* (6) Manoah, Milton's *Samson Agonistes.*

* *Included in recommended list.*

CHRISTIAN DRAMA is the quarterly magazine of the RELIGIOUS DRAMA SOCIETY. *President*: The Lord Bishop of Chichester. *Hon. Director*: E. Martin Browne. *Chairman of Council*: Miss Athene Seyler. *Travelling Adviser*: Miss Carina Robins. *Librarian*: Miss K. Bainbridge-Bell. *Secretary*: T. G. Bartholomew. All enquiries and applications for membership should be addressed to The Secretary, R.D.S., S.P.C.K. House, Northumberland Avenue, W.C. 2.

THINGS NEEDFUL

"If then, in addition to the ordinary difficulties of poetry, all these things are essential to the success of the Christian lyrist—if what he sets before us must be true in substance, and in manner marked by a noble simplicity and confidence in that truth, by a sincere attachment to it, and entire familiarity with it—then we need not wonder that so few should have become eminent in this branch of their art, nor need we have recourse to the disheartening and unsatisfactory solutions which are sometimes given of that circumstance.

"Contemplative piety," says Dr. Johnson, "or the intercourse between God and the human soul, cannot be poetical. Man, admitted to implore the mercy of his Creator, and plead the merits of his Redeemer, is already in a higher state than poetry can confer."

The sentiment is not uncommon among serious but somewhat fearful believers; and though we believe it erroneous, we desire to treat it not only with tenderness, but with reverence. It is, unquestionably, by far the safer extreme to be too much afraid of venturing with the imagination upon sacred ground. Yet, if it be an error, and a practical error, it may be worth while cautiously to examine the grounds of it. [Johnson] argues the point, first, from the nature of poetry, and afterwards from that of devotion.

The essence of poetry is invention; such invention as, by producing something unexpected, surprises and delights. The topics of devotion are few.

It is to be hoped that many men's experience will refute the latter part of this statement. How can the topics of devotion be few, when we are taught to make every part of life, every scene in nature, an occasion—in other words, a topic—of devotion? It might as well be said that connubial love is an unfit subject for poetry, as being incapable of novelty, because after all, it is only ringing the changes upon one simple affection, which everyone understands. The novelty there consists, not in the original topic, but in continually bringing ordinary things, by happy strokes of natural ingenuity, into new associations with the ruling passion.

There 's not a bonny flower than springs
By fountain, shaw, or green;
There 's not a bonnie bird that sings
But minds me of my Jean.

Why need we fear to extend this most beautiful and natural sentiment to "the intercourse between the human soul and its Maker", possessing, as we do, the very highest warrant for the analogy which subsists between conjugal and divine love?

Novelty, therefore, sufficient for all the purposes of poetry, we may have on sacred subjects."

JOHN KEBLE from *Sacred Poetry* (1825).

Published for the Religious Drama Society by the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, London, and printed in Great Britain by the Church Army Press, Cowley, Oxford.